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AZALEA

CULTURAL HINTS



“Longview”

Country home of Robt.O.Rubel, Jr.

Crichton, Ala.

WHOLESALE GROWERS

Azaleas

Camellia Japonicas

Regal Lilies

AZALEA CULTURAL HINTS

Azaleas are easy to grow and flower if attention is given to their requirements.

BEAR THESE FACTS IN MIND

Azaleas are shallow rooted. Roots must always be kept moist. The soil must be well drained. They can stand full sunshine or partial shade; high summer temperature if there is a relative high humidity, and in this section of the U. S., outdoor grown azaleas have frequently withstood 18 degrees above zero without serious injury except to late tender growth.

CARE ON ARRIVAL OF SHIPMENT

Should the plants reach you in a very dry condition, soak both earth and tops in water, long enough to saturate the soil. Shade plants from direct sunshine for three to five days after potting or planting.

Whether these azaleas are potted off or planted in prepared beds, be sure to use the material between which these plants were packed, placing a thin wet layer around the ball of roots before potting or planting. This packing material is Atkins & Dubrows imported peat moss. The use of this peat, next to the ball of roots will encourage quick root development.

Azaleas may be grown in pots or planted in prepared beds. If planted in beds they should be lifted in fall before killing frost, potted off and carried in to a cool greenhouse or protected with cold frames where the night temperature just above freezing suffices. To force these plants in spring, move to a warmer house and spray foliage freely with water to keep up humidity and soften flower buds.

KIND OF SOIL TO USE

Do not use limestone or clay soil in planting azaleas. Azaleas require a sour (acid) soil and they seem to thrive best in a soil showing a Hydrogen Ion (pH) value of 5.0. Your County Farm Demonstrating Agent, or State Agricultural College will test your soil making a pH determination and recommendation for securing acid soil of the proper pH value. A simple but very satisfactory soil Teskit made by the LaMotte Chemical Products Co., McCormick Building, Baltimore, Md., selling at \$2.00 prepaid, including a Soil Handbook, is recommended if you wish to make your own soil tests.

If your soil shows an alkaline or neutral reaction, (pH value 9.0 to 7.0) or only slightly acid, (pH value 6.0), the application of a small amount of powdered commercial sulphate of aluminum (some times sold as Aluminum sulphate), will acidify the soil. Better to use small broken doses, gradually acidifying the soil than to apply too much and have your soil too sour.

Soils showing a pH value below 4.5 have a toxic effect on azaleas, and care should be exercised not to make your soil too acid.

The cumulative effect of repeated watering with hard water, which is alkaline in reaction, will ultimately change an acid soil to neutral or alkaline.

The best way to grow azaleas is to remove neutral or alkaline soil and put in its place, a bed of naturally acid soil, however, if this is not practical, the use of sufficient Sulphate of Aluminum to acidify the soil is recommended.

For pot grown azaleas, use a spongy mixture of equal parts of a light fibrous sandy loam, well rotted leaf mould and sufficient coarse sand to keep soil porous, and pot off firmly.

If well rotted hardwood leaf mould is not available, substitute imported peat moss. We find the latter superior to leaf mould because it is uniformly free from weed seed and fungus.

Good drainage is essential at all times, although azaleas require an abundance of water when growing and uniform moisture at all other times. Crushed lumps of charcoal in the bottom of pots is desirable to take care of drainage.

Potted azaleas should be plunged to the rims in sand, ashes or peat moss. This keeps the roots cool and prevents the soil from drying out too rapidly.

Use pots one inch larger in diameter than the plants were formerly grown in and shift to the next larger size pot when root bound. Don't be afraid to knock the plants out of pots occasionally to see if they are root bound, needing shifting or to examine the soil to see if it is uniformly moist.

In potting azaleas, be sure to leave sufficient reservoir on top of pot so one filling of the reservoir will saturate the entire soil contents.

PLANTING IN THE OPEN GROUND

Select a spot that has good natural drainage.

If planted in the open ground, any good garden soil, free from lime and stiff clay, but full of decaying vegetable humus will do. If this soil is lacking, excavation is necessary, digging holes large enough to accommodate each plant. Place each azalea in a hole about three inches larger in diameter than the size pot it was grown in, and pack congenial soil about the roots, then mulch with leaf mould or peat moss.

Avoid low wet places when planting azaleas in the open ground. They may be located in semi-shade, under lath house or in full sunshine, after all danger of frost has past. The more sunshine they receive, the more flowers they will develop and the colors will be more vivid. When grown in full sunshine, more care will be needed to watering, as both soil and foliage will dry out faster than when planted under partial shade.

WATERING

Water when dry at the roots, giving enough water to wet every root and fiber, and be sure never to allow the plants to suffer from the lack of water.

During hot weather, spray (Syringe) foliage at least once a day, unless it rains. If syringing is attended to, azaleas will be free from red spiders and thrip.

We syringe azaleas in the greenhouse during the coldest winter days, giving sufficient ventilation to dry off the foliage by night. In large plantings, much time will be saved if watering is taken care of by an overhead irrigating line, especially during hot weather when plants should have the foliage moistened in the morning and evenings.

CULTIVATION

At no time should these plants be cultivated or hoed. Weeds or grass should be pulled out by hand. The roots of azaleas grow on the surface of the ground and cultivation would ruin the roots.

FERTILIZATION

A top dressing of extra well rotted cow manure is very beneficial when azaleas are in active growth, or a very light application of Swift's Vigoro may be used at intervals of two weeks during the growing period, with beneficial results.

GREENHOUSE FORCING

In the winter, azaleas carried in a 50 degree night temperature produce larger flowers, are easier to manage, although they will not bloom as early as plants held at a higher temperature. Blooming plants require syringing twice a day if kept in a high temperature, while those grown in a cool house should be syringed every morning, if the weather is bright.

New growth often starts at the base of flower buds when plants are kept in a warm atmosphere. This new growth must be pinched out if flowers are to develop.

When finished flowering, those plants remaining unsold should be kept in a warm moist house and freely sprayed to encourage new growth. Such plants will complete their first growth earlier than if kept cold after flowering.

Repot if they are pot bound, or line out in prepared beds and grow on as outlined above.

All large plants not needing re-potting, top dress with fresh soil, first removing an inch of the old soil from top of pots.

PRUNING

Use pruning shears freely, cut old or young wood away to keep plants shapely. Cut off all twiggy and weak wood and all seed pods. The terminal buds may be pinched out immediately after flowering, which will cause the plants to branch sidewise and thicken.

Until the first of July, pinch back the tips of new growth, leaving three or four new leaves, in order to develop more compact plants and increase the number of flower buds.

ROBT. O. RUBEL, Jr.
Crichton, Ala.

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